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WASHINGTON, DC—Congressman Peter DeFazio (D-Springfield) today was joined by other members of Congress, highway safety advocates, independent drivers, and a woman who lost three family members in a crash involving a Mexican truck urging the Administration to listen to the will of the House and not implement the cross-border pilot program.

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The Administration still hasn't addressed basic concerns about the pilot program. Mexico-domiciled truck drivers are notoriously abused. They are often forced to drive up to 72 hours without sleep in order to make deliveries and freely admit they have to use stimulants in order to make those runs. The pilot program does not ensure that Mexican trucking companies meet U.S. safety standards such as regulating hours of service, vehicle safety, driver training and licensing, and drug testing.

"The Administration has indicated to me that tomorrow they will open the US border to 100 Mexican-domiciled trucking companies," DeFazio said. "This is a sad day for America. Mexican trucks pose a serious threat to the safety of our highways and the security of our country. This Administration is hell-bent on opening up our borders but has failed to require that Mexican drivers and trucks meet the same safety and security standards as US drivers and trucks. That's simply unacceptable. The Administration is essentially adopting a faith-based paper system without adequate protections for public safety."

"I will continue to push the Senate to act, as the House did, to prevent this program from going forward," DeFazio continued. "The safety of the traveling public must come first -- before the Administration's fantasies about free trade."

Earlier this year, Secretary of Transportation Peters announced the Administration's intent to implement a one-year pilot program to allow up to 100 trucking companies from Mexico full access to U.S. highways. The U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) made clear that at the conclusion of the one-year pilot program, the US-Mexico border would be permanently open to

Mexican trucks without any analysis of the impacts of the program.

In May, the House voted overwhelmingly, 411-3, to pass H.R. 1773, the Safe American Roads Act of 2007, legislation which would extend the pilot program to three years and ensure that DOT establishes a process to analyze the impact of allowing Mexican trucks on our nation's roadways, before the border is completely opened. Provisions were also included in the FY 2007 Iraq War Supplemental spending bill (P.L. 110-28) to impose strict measures to ensure that the pilot program adheres to safety and security guidelines and that its progress is assessed by an independent panel. And in July, the House approved an amendment offered by Rep. DeFazio to prohibit the use of federal funds to implement the pilot program. The amendment was offered to H.R. 3074, the FY 2008 Transportation-HUD Appropriations Act and was approved by a voice vote. The Senate has not taken similar action.

Federal law states that the Administration cannot jeopardize or degrade the safety of the American public by circumventing truck safety standards or congressional oversight in implementing this pilot program.

Congress enacted these provisions after growing frustration with the Administration's clear desire to open the border at any cost, without regard for the safety of the traveling public.

DeFazio chairs the House Subcommittee on Highways and Transit which has jurisdiction over motor carriers.